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SUBJECT: PDAS SHAPIRO FOCUSES ON ANDEAN REGION WITH EU

REF: A. A) USEU TODAY 11/17/05

[1](#)B. B) STATE 207705

[1](#)C. C) BRUSSELS 4149

[1](#)D. D) BRUSSELS 3353

Classified By: USEU POLOFF TODD HUIZINGA, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: WHA PDAS Charles Shapiro's November 15 discussions with EU officials focused principally on Venezuela, Colombia and Bolivia. On Venezuela, the European Commission (EC) acknowledged that the EU observation mission to the December elections would have to take care not to be seen as endorsing the election results. The EC Venezuela deskoff said the mission's purpose is not to validate the results, but to scrutinize the entire electoral process; he said the EC would officially request U.S. support in ensuring the mission's findings are respected by all parties in Venezuela. On Colombia, Shapiro's interlocutors said EC assistance could be increased if the Justice and Peace Law were implemented effectively. The EU will not observe the December Bolivian elections; the EU Council reported that Movement towards Socialism leader Evo Morales, on a recent trip to Paris and Madrid, had said he would seek Venezuelan help in developing Bolivia's natural gas sector if foreign companies did not accept his conditions for their involvement. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On November 15 WHA PDAS Charles Shapiro met with EU officials from both the European Commission (EC) and the EU Council. Present at the EC meeting were External Relations Deputy DirGen Karel Kovanda, Acting Director for Latin American Affairs Victor Andres Maldonado, and Venezuela Desk Officer David Bruck. Shapiro's EU Council interlocutors were Director for Transatlantic Relations Jim Cloos and Latin America Adviser Nicolas Pascual de la Parte.

(NOTE TO WHA POSTS: The European Commission is the "executive" branch of the EU, responsible for acting in the interest of the EU as a supranational institution. On foreign policy, the EC's power resides in its control of the EU's development assistance funds. The EC alone is the third largest bilateral donor, with the EU as a whole (EC plus EU member states) being the largest. The EU Council, in contrast, represents EU member-state governments and their sovereign interests as expressed in consensus decisions among the 25. The Council is headed by Javier Solana, who is the High Representative for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. END NOTE.)

VENEZUELA: EU AT A LOSS ON CHAVEZ

[1](#)3. (C) Kovanda said the EU shared U.S. concerns on Venezuela, but remarked that there was little anyone could do about it. He predicted Chavez forces would win the December legislative elections hands down, regardless of the degree to which they are free and fair. He said the EU election observation mission was in danger of inadvertently contributing to the credibility of the mandate Chavez would receive from the electorate. Kovanda said EU observers would have to be very careful not to endorse implicitly Venezuela's electronic voting technology -- which he feared the EU would not be able to monitor reliably -- nor to be seen as endorsing the election results. Bruck stressed, though, that the observation mission would scrutinize the entire electoral process. He predicted the observers would likely criticize quite a few aspects of that process, such as the unreliability of the voter registry and the politicization of the National Electoral Council. The observation mission leader, said Bruck, would be a Portuguese center-right member of the European Parliament (and former GOP minister), Jose Albino Silva Peneda.

[1](#)4. (C) In response, Shapiro agreed that election observation would be difficult and might play into Chavez's hands. He urged the EU, though, to focus on helping keep as much space open as possible in Venezuela for civil society -- NGO's, churches, the private sector -- and the exercise of democratic freedoms.

EU TO REQUEST SUPPORT FOR ELECTION MISSION

[1](#)5. (C) Bruck first told Shapiro that European Commissioner

Ferrero-Waldner would send a letter to Secretary Rice about the EU election observation mission. Later, though, he called to correct that, saying the EU had decided instead to explain its purposes and goals for the mission, and solicit U.S. support, in a demarche to State within the next week. Main points in the demarche would be:

--The EU encourages every effort to promote national reconciliation and democratic principles, tolerance and dialogue in Venezuela;

--EU Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner made clear, when announcing to the Venezuelans the decision to send an observer mission, that it was the GOV's responsibility to act to inspire confidence in Venezuelan civil society in the election process;

--The EU hopes the observer mission will send a clear signal to the Venezuelan government and civil society of the EU's commitment to strengthen genuine democracy in the country;

--The mission's purpose is not to validate the election results, but to scrutinize the entire electoral process;

--The EC would appreciate U.S. assistance in ensuring that all parties in Venezuela -- government, opposition, and civil society -- will respect the mission's findings.

EU COLOMBIA SUPPORT TO UNFOLD WITH EVENTS

16. (C) Shapiro described the progress being made in Colombia under President Uribe's leadership, and underlined the USG decision to commit USD 20.5 million to support demobilization of paramilitaries. He urged the EU also to increase, as much as possible, its monetary, in-kind and personnel support for the peace process with paramilitary groups (ref B). Kovanda said that the EU was prepared to assist victims of the conflict and to support the reintegration of child combatants. Referring to the EU FonMins' October declaration on Colombia, Pascual said the EU was willing to work with the Justice and Peace Law as the framework, but was observing closely the law's implementation before committing to steps beyond those mentioned by Kovanda. He added that it was also up to the Colombians to put concrete proposals for assistance on the table for EU consideration. Cloos said prospects for future EU support were good; the EU supported Uribe, and recognition of Uribe's accomplishments had grown among EU officials and citizens.

EU SHARES BOLIVIA CONCERNS

17. (C) Shapiro recounted all of the problems facing Bolivia, stressing that, with its weak institutions, regional and ethnic tensions, and Movement Towards Socialism leader Evo Morales' revolutionary populism, Bolivia would be very difficult to govern after the December 18 elections. Kovanda confirmed the EU was not sending an observer mission to the elections, because the Bolivians had not invited the EU far enough in advance. In lieu of the EU, Shapiro urged his interlocutors to encourage EU member states to send observers to help the small OAS mission. Bruck reported that the European Parliament (EP) was sending a group to observe unofficially. (NOTE: An EP contact later told us the decision had not yet been made, but that Spanish Socialist Labor MEPs Emilio Menendez del Valle and Luis Yanez-Barnuevo would probably be among those who would participate. END NOTE.) Finally, Pascual reported that Evo Morales, on a recent trip to Paris and Madrid, had been at pains to appear moderate. At the same time, he had sent a "two-track" message on developing Bolivia's natural gas sector: on the one hand he said that, if he became president, he might accept international private sector involvement; on the other hand, he indicated that he would seek Venezuelan help if the private sector did not accept his terms and conditions for its involvement.

18. (C) CDA COMMENT: Shapiro's visit, together with the recent visits of EUR PDAS Kurt Volker (ref D) and Cuba Transition Coordinator Caleb McCarry (ref C), has demonstrated our desire to intensify engagement with the EU on Latin America and the Caribbean. Keeping the EU apprised of our interests in the region -- and doing so beyond the twice-yearly COLAT discussions -- helps encourage the EU to be more cooperative on contentious issues and on longer-term democracy and development goals in the region. To that end, we would like to invite A/S Shannon to Brussels to meet with EU counterparts early in the new year. END CDA COMMENT.

MCKINLEY

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